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Washington, Sept. 27.—Changing the guard over at the Central Intelligence Agency is a little bit like tampering with the "untouchables" or the FBI. It requires the most delicate and skillful kind of political surgery to keep the surgeon from cutting himself.

At first blush—or rather first "hush"—it appears that President Kennedy has filled the bill with his appointment of Republican John A. McCone to take over Allen W. Dulles' controversial post as the nation's chief spy.

Whatever McCone's merits are, and whatever his potential as master of espionage may be, his selection was dictated by high politics. It was a deliberate move by Kennedy to prevent the inevitable change in command from plunging the already-tattered CIA into a disruptive political storm at an especially critical moment in the cold war.

As a symbol of bipartisanship, McCone's credentials are impeccable. He is a lifelong Republican who has been on good terms with both the conservative and liberal wings of his party. He held high government posts under former President Truman. And as chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission under President Eisenhower, he worked closely and well with Democrat leaders in Congress.

One influential Democrat, a key member of the Senate House Committee on Atomic Energy, confessed to some uncertainty as to how well McCone will do as CIA boss. But he called his appointment "an excellent choice, because it keeps the bipartisan stamp on the most secret and sensitive of all government agencies."

Although it was generally assumed when Kennedy came in that Dulles would step out in due course, the change still presented formidable political difficulties. And these were compounded several times over when both Dulles and the CIA fell under a cloud of criticism in the national teeth-grashing over the Cuban debacle.

Kennedy and Dulles Agree on Best Choice

Despite an underground effort to shift blame to the White House and State Department, the CIA still came under heavy fire from key Administration leaders. But Kennedy, aware of Dulles' powerful Republican support and public standing, went out of his way to block any move to make him a scapegoat and postponed any idea of immediately picking a replacement.

More than that, the President invited Dulles to help line up his own successor. As he reported in Newport today, he and Dulles conferred at length on making the transition "as smoothly and effectively as possible" and both had agreed that McCone was the best choice.

Unlike Dulles, who got on-the-job training in espionage in both World Wars, McCone has never really been in the spy business. He is basically a very successful industrialist from California. But he's also had a lot of experience in government and at least a casual acquaintance with the secret arts which he will now direct.

During HST's Administration, he served as a member of an air policy commission (1947), as a special deputy to the later Defense Secretary James Forrestal (1948) and finally as an undersecretary of the Air Force. The late Secretary of State John Foster Dulles named him to a personnel task force in the State Department (1954), and four years later Ike picked him for the AEC.



Allen W. Dulles
Helps to pick successor

McCone Is Remembered as a Tough Boss

On the AEC, McCone battled doggedly, but vainly, for continuing atomic testing as long as there was no anti-cheating agreement with the Russians. He also skillfully repaired the Administration's relations with Congress after they had been pretty well demolished by former AEC Chairman Lewis L. Strauss.

With Congressmen, he was always the very epitome of congenial accommodation, ever solicitous of their views and, within the limits of Administration policy, willing to cooperate. He even won the admiration of Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.) by supporting a controversial proposal to tap the Hanford (Wash.) plutonium plant for public power.

Behind the closed doors of the AEC, however, McCone was known as a harsh taskmaster who was even harder on his aids than the celebrated tough Strauss. As one former assistant put it, he inspired fear rather than affection. And an official who worked under him in the Air Force remembers McCone as a brilliant and able administrator, but "a very tough boss."

One Congressional leader, intimately acquainted with McCone's work on the AEC, rated him high on administration and getting things done but not so high on imagination and creative leadership. All things considered, however, he called him a good choice.

Dulles Built an Around-the-World CIA

Actually, McCone's responsibilities will be considerably more circumscribed than Dulles'. Dulles, during his eight pioneering years on the assignment, built the CIA into a huge organization reaching around the world not only for gathering the raw material of intelligence but also for masterminding secret operations with which the U.S. didn't want to be publicly connected.

Some of these operations, notably the U-2 spy flights over Russia, were directly concerned with intelligence. But others, like the CIA-aided overthrow of the Communist Arbenz regime in Guatemala, were out-and-out cloak-and-dagger operations that had faint connection with intelligence.

The Cuban fiasco, which also fell into the operations category, brought immediate demands that the CIA stick to intelligence and get out of the business of engineering coups and launching invasions. According to informed sources, this was one of the first conclusions reached by Attorney General Robert Kennedy and the other special investigators Kennedy assigned to look into the CIA after Cuba. Thus McCone will presumably be required to stick to intelligence when he takes over.